



Pollution Control Services Department
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MEMORANDUM

To: Files

Date: January 30, 2014

From: Michael Wehr

**Re: San Jacinto River Pit
Community Meeting**

A community meeting with the EPA to discuss and present the Draft Feasibility Study was conducted Jan 30th. at the Highlands Community Center. A number of community groups and governmental agencies were in attendance to review and comment on the proposed remediation alternatives presented in the Draft Feasibility Study for the Northern Impoundment Portion of the San Jacinto Superfund Site. The two main community groups that attended were the Texans Together Group and San Jacinto River Coalition. The governmental agencies that attended were the EPA, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) along with representatives from Harris County Precinct Two, the County Attorney's Office and Pollution Control Services Department. In attendance for the Harris County Pollution Control Services were: Bob Allen, Latrice Babin, and Mike Wehr.

The presentation portion of the meeting started at 6:30 PM. Gary Miller presented some background information on the site and all of the remedial alternatives that were presented with the draft feasibility study. There was strong opposition to all of the remedial alternatives with exception to alternative number six which indicates the removal of material exceeding the protective concentration level of 220 ng/kg. There was also discussion as to how the cleanup levels were determined and what the acceptable cleanup levels of dioxins should be. A representative from DSHS indicated that is not safe to swim or eat fish in the river from Galveston Bay all the way to Lake Houston. A representative of the Sierra Club proposed that the cleanup level was too high and should be reduced to 50 ng/kg from 220 ng/kg. In addition, there were numerous complaints about contaminated drinking water, (public and private sources) and high rates of illness within the Highlands community as a result of contamination from the San Jacinto Waste Pits.

MEMORANDUM

Valmichael Leos from the EPA spoke about the high degree of rock displacement on the west side of the northern impoundment caused by a recent rain event and the repairs that were made to the cap based on recommendations from the United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE). A community member alleged that the Northern Waste Pit was currently leaking waste into the river on the northwest side of the impoundment. The same community member also alleged that the placement of the rock cap caused hazardous material from the waste pit to be squeezed out of the bottom and that it was visible using Google Earth satellite map application.

There continues to be a concern within the community about fishing in regards to the businesses that promote fishing to visitors as well as potential commercial sale of fish by licensed commercial fishermen. In addition, members of the community allege that many of the residents had cancer and were dying from the effects exposure to contaminated waters from the waste pits. The comments from the community members to the EPA indicate four highlighted concerns: 1) the need for the complete removal of the dioxins in northern impoundment 2) the community's health issues-- an epidemiological study was verbally requested and 3) the quality of the water in individual water wells as well as the 20% well water mixture to the water provided by the local water district and 4) the ownership and status of potential cleanup on the southern impoundment's waste.

AGENDA
OPEN HOUSE
SAN JACINTO RIVER WASTE PITS
SUPERFUND SITE
JANUARY 30, 2014
HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY CENTER

6:00 PM	INFORMAL MEET AND GREET OPEN HOUSE	
6:30 PM	WELCOME	EPA
	INTRODUCTIONS	AGENCIES
	GROUND RULES	
6:45 PM	START PRESENTATIONS	
	RI/FS AND OVERALL SITE STATUS	GARY MILLER
	TCRA CAP STATUS	VALMICHAEL LEOS
	OTHER	
7:15 PM	QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	
8:00 PM	CONCLUDE MEETING	EPA
	INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS	ALL



JOIN US AT OUR NEXT MONTHLY MEETING!

When? Tuesday, February 11, 2014 at 6:30pm

Where? Highlands Chamber of Commerce.
127 San Jacinto St, Highlands, TX 77562

Babysitting available upon request.

Contact: Jeyoung@texanstogogether.org 713-782-8833



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Site Update

San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site

Harris County, Texas

January 2014

This fact sheet will tell you about:

- **Current site activities**
- **Environmental and Public Health concerns**
- **Community Awareness**
- **What happens next?**
- **Site background**
- **Community Engagement**
- **For more information/Contacts**

Current site activities

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in cooperation with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Harris County, Port of Houston Authority and federal, state and local officials, are finalizing the Remedial Investigation / Feasibility Study (RI/FS) which will be completed in early 2014 to determine the best options to address site cleanup. This information will be shared with the community as it becomes available. EPA, working with site responsible parties, will also continue to closely monitor the site source stabilization cap placed over contained contaminants in 2011.

EPA is also carefully reviewing results from testing and characterization of a Southern Impoundment area located directly south of the current site and the I-10 Bridge.

In late 2014, EPA in coordination with site partner agencies will release the Proposed Plan for the site and will seek public input through appropriate venues.

After receiving public input on the agencies' Proposed Plan for cleanup, EPA in cooperation with partner agencies and the responsible parties will finalize the remedial plan for site cleanup. EPA will keep the public up updated during this process.

In regard to the site's Time Critical Removal Action (TCRA) cap, additional rock is being added for construction enhancements. The enhancement of the cap will be completed in late February dependent upon weather conditions and tides.

The waste pits are located near the west bank of the San Jacinto River, north of the I-10 Bridge.

The site's Project Managers will continue to further define site contamination, though the site has now been stabilized, and to develop a long term cleanup plan.

The RI/FS is expected to be completed in early 2014.

Environmental and Public Health concerns:

Bilingual Fish Consumption Advisories are in place for the nearby San Jacinto River; persons should limit fish consumption to no more than one 8-ounce meal per month, and children under 12 and pregnant women should not eat any species of fish. Safety and health warning signs have been posted extensively throughout the area. Risk assessment for the area will continue to be updated.

The EPA's 2011 time critical removal action included the design and construction of a physical protective barrier surrounding waste Ponds 1 and 2 that address the release or threat of release of dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans into the San Jacinto River. In addition to the construction of a physical barrier to keep the waste secure, public access restrictions were put into place. The restrictions involve placement of security fences and signs to prevent trespassing onto the property. The security fencing will prevent access of unauthorized persons into the entire area containing the waste impoundments. Additional sediment and surface water samples were taken for the design and construction of the protective barrier. The barrier is structurally sufficient to withstand forces sustained by the river, or severe weather events including any future erosion and is structurally sound until a final remedy is designed and implemented.

Community Awareness

To assure public awareness of the site's significance, a wide range of no-trespassing and cautionary signs regarding contact with the site and consumption of seafood have been posted around the perimeter of the site in multiple languages. Fencing and barbed wire along more than 3,000 feet of shoreline were also installed in 2010 to prevent public access.

What happens next?

EPA, in cooperation with TCEQ and other Harris County partner agencies, will continue to finalize the draft RI/FS for the site. The RI/FS frames the longer term clean-up plan for the site. The impacted communities will have opportunities to provide input to the RI/FS. This action will lead to a Proposed Plan for cleanup being developed which will be shared with the community. EPA, TCEQ and Harris County have held multiple community engagement meetings and will continue to collaborate on the RI/FS and the best possible practices to inform and involve site visitors, residents, local, state and federal partners on site health concerns and future site-related activities.

Site background

The San Jacinto River Waste Pits site is on the western bank of the San Jacinto River, in Harris County, Texas, immediately north and south of the Interstate Highway 10 (I-10) bridge over the San Jacinto River and is located east of the City of Houston between two unincorporated areas known as Channelview and Highlands. The site was constructed in the 1960s for disposal of pulp and paper mill waste. The site's waste pits consist of two impoundments north of I-10, and the Southern Impoundment located south of I-10.

The two ponds containing hazardous substances were partially submerged in the San Jacinto River, as well as locations where the hazardous substances may have been deposited, placed or otherwise come to be located. Including the Southern Impoundment, all of the impoundments are currently under investigation.

The site was placed on the National Priorities List (NPL) on March 19, 2008. The NPL is the EPA's list of uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites identified for long term cleanup under the federal Superfund program.

Community Engagement

In 2012, EPA awarded a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) to the Galveston Bay Foundation. Galveston Bay is the lead agency to interpret site information and data for the community with the assistance of a Technical Advisor.

The San Jacinto Community Awareness Committee (CAC), comprised of EPA, state and Harris County agencies, also meets frequently to review and respond to site community engagement and public issues impacted by the site.

For more information

U.S. EPA

Gary Miller
Superfund Remedial Project Manager
214.665.8318 or 1.800.533.3508 (toll-free)

Valmichael Leos
Superfund Remedial Project Manager
214.665.2283 or 1.800.533.3508 (toll-free)

**Donn Walters, EPA Community Involvement,
Superfund Public Liaison**
214.665.6483 or 1.800.533.3508 (toll-free)

Superfund Regional Counsel
214.665.2157 or 1.800.533.3508 (toll-free)

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Stephen Ellis, Project Manager, Superfund Section
512.239.6368

Crystal Taylor
Community Relations, Superfund Section
512.239.3844

Texas Department of State Health Services

Tina Walker
walker.tina@dshs.state.tx.us
512.776.2932 or 1.800.588.1248 x2932

Site Repository
Stratford Branch Library
509 Stratford Street
Highlands, Texas

All inquiries from the news media should be directed to the Region 6 Press Office at 214.665.2200.

San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site on the internet:

<http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/pdf/files/san-jacinto-tx.pdf>

http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san_jacinto/

https://www.epaos.org/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=6534

To receive a Spanish translation of this fact sheet call U.S. EPA at 1.800.533.3508 (toll-free).

Para recibir una traducción en español de esta hoja de datos, comuníquese con la Agencia de Protección del Medio Ambiente de los EEUU (la EPA) al número de teléfono 1.800.533.3508 (llamada gratis).



**SAN JACINTO RIVER WASTE PITS
SUPERFUND SITE
OPEN HOUSE AND COMMUNITY MEETING
Highlands, Harris County, Texas
Thursday, January 30, 2014
6:00 p.m. / 6:30 p.m.**



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in cooperation with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Harris County, and local officials, will conduct an **Open House and Community Meeting for the San Jacinto Waste Pits site on Thursday, January 30, 2014, at the Highlands Community Center, 604 Highland Woods Drive, Highlands, TX. An informal Meet and Greet will be held from 6:00 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. The Community Meeting will be from 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.**

This informal meeting is to provide the community with an update on the EPA's cleanup and plans for the site located on the west bank of the San Jacinto River directly north of the I-10 Bridge.

This meeting will give residents the opportunity to ask questions to agency and other officials and to provide input on this local Superfund cleanup project.

Action items to be discussed include the results of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS); status of the site stabilization cap, and what's next.

The meeting is being held in a fully accessible facility. Should you have any specific needs or questions about the facility, please contact EPA Community Involvement at 1.800.533.3508 (toll-free).

Additional information also is available on the following EPA websites:

http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san_jacinto/

http://epaossc.org/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=6534

Para información en español, comuníquese con la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de los Estados Unidos (la EPA) a 1.800.533.3508 (llamada gratis).



United States
Environmental Protection
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Region 6
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Dallas, TX 75202



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**Harris County Pollution Control
107 N Munger Street
Pasadena, TX 77506-1322**



San Jacinto River Waste Pits Quick Facts

What are the San Jacinto River Waste Pits?

The San Jacinto River Waste Pits (SJRW) is an abandoned toxic waste site (Superfund site). The SJRW are located in East Houston on the San Jacinto River between Highlands and Channelview. The pits are situated to the north and south of Interstate 10 and are partially submerged in the San Jacinto River. In 2007 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency made a national priority to clean up this hazardous site.

What does this mean for your family?

It is recommended that you and your family DO NOT swim, fish or consume oysters, blue crabs and clams near the SJRW. Exposure to the toxic chemicals from this site can occur through absorption into the skin, ingestion and inhalation. Exposure to the toxins from this site can cause a wide range of health issues such as cancer, birth defects, skin rashes, disrupted liver function, autoimmune disorders and nerve disorders.

What makes the pits so toxic?

The SJRW contain high concentrations of some of the worst chemicals known to man, along with many other toxic chemicals. The main chemicals of concern are Dioxins (commonly known as Agent Orange), Furans, PCBs and Mercury. The pits are located in a residential area in close proximity to many popular fishing and swimming spots.

How did this happen?

In the 1960's the waste pits were constructed for the disposal of a Pasadena paper mill's waste sludge. Hazardous waste was dumped in the pits until the mid-1970's. It was not until 2005 that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department discovered the SJRW and preliminary remediation did not begin for another 6 years. The potentially responsible parties for this Superfund site are *Waste Management and International Paper*.

For more information please visit texanstogogether.org, search San Jacinto River Coalition on Facebook, email jeyoung@texanstogogether.org or call 713-782-8833



Sample Questions

1. If Dioxin is in our yard, is it safe for our children to play?
2. Why are some fish safe to eat and some are not?
3. What could happen to myself or my family if we eat the fish?
4. Where can I find a doctor to test me for Dioxin or toxins from this site?
5. Is it safe to swim in the river?
6. Will we ever be able to fish in the San Jacinto River?
7. What will happen when a storm comes and the river floods?
8. Has our groundwater been affected?
9. What are the health effects of the chemicals in this site?
10. Could the toxins from this site harm my animals?
11. When will there be a final decision made about this site?
12. Will we be informed of this decision? And how?